

Central Intelligence Agency



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Kim Dae Jung and Benigno Aquino:
Some Key Differences

Despite apparent parallels between these two men, we see several key differences:

- Kim lacks the broad personal appeal and stature in his home country that Aquino enjoyed.
- Kim also lacks the political base that Aquino had in the Laban and Liberal parties. His current vehicle, the Council for the Promotion of Democracy, is a fragile accommodation with archrival Kim Young Sam that has no mass support and no role in parliamentary politics.

Kim, as did Aquino, recognizes that exile erodes his political influence and may be gambling that this grandstand play will help him regain his stature.

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Korea Branch, Northeast Asia Division, Office of East Asian Analysis. Information available as of 1 October 1984. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Korea Branch, Northeast Asia Division, OEA [redacted]

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- [redacted]
- The political atmosphere in Seoul has loosened up somewhat over the past two years, partly as a result of President Chun's growing confidence and his desire to stage credible midterm legislative elections.
 - The situation is nowhere near as volatile as the one Aquino was returning to in Manila, where President Marcos's ill health had triggered serious jockeying over the succession. [redacted]

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The South Korean Army is a far greater force in its country's politics than its Philippine counterpart and it deeply distrusts Kim.

- Many of Chun's influential supporters in the military believe Kim should have been put to death in 1981. Against this background, we doubt Chun and the Army would be satisfied with anything less than close house arrest.

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[redacted]

We are less certain about the lessons North Korea may have drawn from the Aquino assassination. P'yongyang may well view Kim as a tempting target whose assassination could provide an easy means of spurring widespread unrest. [redacted]

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Kim could also have a more flexible schedule than Aquino.

- Among other things, Aquino was anxious about Marcos's health and wanted to be in Manila had Marcos died.
- Kim has not given evidence that he feels absolutely tied to a return before the end of the year, although we suspect he perceives the next six months--to include elections in the United States and South Korea--as an important opportunity. [redacted]

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